

# REWRITE



## The Magazine of Effective Writing

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### WHEN WRITERS WORK TOGETHER

It is a truism that conditions for writers would be much better if all writers united, either in one big organization or groups, to talk over and act upon their common worries. That is why we discuss this subject at frequent intervals and try to suggest projects that writers either singly or in clubs could do for their own benefit. We have for years advocated (1) a larger, more all-embracing, and hence more forceful, membership for the Authors' League of America. There are small or part-time, but nevertheless professional writers, who should be eligible & encouraged to join that organization and so stand fast with their colleagues in working for better protection of all writers' interests. Failing that, they should join and support such crusading, essentially non-profit organizations as WRITERS' COUNSEL SERVICE and the NATIONAL WRITERS' CLUB. Both do yeoman service in behalf of writers, but their means naturally are limited by the personal fortunes & time, energy, etc. of their directors

(2) It has been our opinion, again expressed these many years, that writers' conference groups could and should take a more active, zealous role in this field. For some years, the University of New Hampshire Conference, it is true, used to hold a Committee-of-the-Whole meeting to discuss problems connected with the Conference and other related matters. This, however, has been abandoned, and although the Conference is the only one that has a skeleton year-round organization, it's not organized to do much real work to better writers' conditions. Yet 100 writers from all parts of the country, could be a powerful force in formulating policies informally, expressing opinions and laying a cornerstone for future work by clubs, or even the organizations mentioned above. I know that we at WRITERS' COUNSEL SERVICE use such conferences as a listening-post to learn writers' interests and needs.

The idea of Cooperatives for consumers or specialists is spreading throughout America because of the greed for profits of private capitalists, or the lack of imagination the big industrialists sometimes show in adapting their product to the needs of customers. A practical illustration of this is the book trade, which required 20 years, the competition of the book clubs and a great war, to learn that millions of new customers should be serviced with dollar and 25¢ books. The lesson has not yet been entirely learned nor successful distribution on a peacetime basis been worked out.

Our experience with WRITERS' COUNSEL SERVICE and our friendly association with David Raffelock of the NATIONAL WRITERS' CLUB has proved to us that writers working together, in a common cause, can get better results & save money. Our WRITERS' BOOK CLUB, and our envelop supply service have saved many writ-

ers hundreds of dollars in the aggregate. A great deal more could be done on an expanded scale. Savings mount rapidly when central purchasing facilities are developed extensively.

Here are some of the things that could be done if writers were well organized:

(1) Copyright Legislation. The U.S. copyright law could be modernized and the present international copyright, which UN is presently seeking to adopt, could be sustained. In its present antiquated form our copyright amounts to a national disgrace.

(2) Postal Service. The interests of writers could be protected when, as in the contemporary session of Congress inequitable raises in the postal rates are contemplated. Moreover, a strong writers' organization should bring pressure for modernization of methods of handling mail and speeding up delivery.

(3) Better Writing Conditions. The problems of low pay and pay-on-publication, as well as improperly financed publishers ("skips") or vanity publishers could be adequately taken care of by a central clearinghouse. Records not easily available to individual writers, could be kept on file, and accurate information quickly dispensed.

(4) Market Data. With a small office clerical staff collating information and writers everywhere sending in brief reports of personal experience, better data could be made available than is now offered by any of the market lists. A very few trained and experienced workers could handle this service. A writers' club could easily train volunteers and if all or even half the writers' groups in the country would adopt an aggressive and uniform way to record information, and, then, exchanged this with the other clubs or sent it through a master-file at headquarters, it would be easy to have a much better "market list" than is now anywhere published. We at REWRITE do this for you to the very limited extent of our time and energy. An increasing number of writers see the good sense of being WCS Minute Men. They get more than they give.

(5) Report on Agents, Critics, etc. The NAC has a confidential service for its members. REWRITE constantly collects information regarding all services appealing for writers' trade and dollars. We are always glad to advise writers gratis whether they are likely to get good value. But obviously we are not in a position to know everything. A central cooperative organization could do a more efficient job.

(6) Purchasing Cooperative. If all writers, and other interested parties, bought all of their supplies through a central purchasing unit, they could save thousands of dollars. These are just a few of the possibilities.

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<u>LOVE YOUR</u>	<u>William E. Harris,</u>	<u>PEACE</u>
<u>AMERICA</u>	<u>Elva Ray Harris,</u>	<u>IS YOUR</u>
<u>ENOUGH!</u>	<u>Editors.</u>	<u>BUSINESS</u>

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CHANGE OF ADDRESS—we cannot be responsible for changes not received in this office ONE month in advance of taking effect. Whenever possible, please give exact date of change. PROMPT RENEWALS help us to serve you better.

### WE CAN HAVE FREEDOM IF WE PAY FOR IT!

"We Americans have no monopoly on ideas—but we do rather better with them than some other nations."

During this month when we celebrate American independence, let us ponder that crisp comment by one of the great atomic scientists while he was being inquisitioned by the current crop of witch-hunters in Washington. It happens that he has rather more imagination for the real values of life than most men in public life today. (His articles in the ATLANTIC MONTHLY and his appearances on "Town Meeting of the Air" programs will testify to that.) His comment is at once a statement of fact and a challenge. We have created one of the great eras of material wealth of history. But whether we can maintain it and turn it into one of the lasting civilizations, is dependent on how well we use our ideas.

The "depression" which REWRITE was one of the first magazines in the country to refer to by its right name, is now an accepted fact. Economists are merely trying to decide, and prophecy how big it will be. The plain fact of the matter is that its extent will be determined by how well we use our ideas. And it is regrettable that we have not used our ideas very well to date.

Some depressions are more or less unavoidable, being the results of much accumulated mismanagement over a long period of years. A depression such as we are now experiencing, however, is comparatively unnecessary. It is the result of our own bad judgment and lack of fortitude. We have done nothing to clear up the cost of the war (3 years of destroying valuable property earlier generations of the human race had worked hard to create) or to prevent inflation. We have allowed politicians to indulge in unmitigated waste and to enslave us in a maze of bureaucratic confusion and overwhelming tax oppression. The kind of world we want is simply not possible

so long as we fly in the face of elementary economics and ordinary arithmetic, of which many of the so-called economics authorities are abysmally ignorant.

Many economists today profess to be amazed and puzzled that savings are rising fast and unemployment is rising sharply. The American people, twice burned by World Wars, have learned a lesson that their leaders do not seem to have yet. The politicians & some businessmen thought that the age of the golden suckers was here to stay.

Unfortunately, you cannot continually add to the cost of doing business (higher wages, taxes, more taxes) and expect the customers to continue to buy. Our own people (you and I and our next door neighbors) are just not buying unessentials. With one hand we "lend" money to European countries so they can buy our goods. With the other we force the cost of buying our goods up to such a point that the money we lend is worth less and less, & just to complete the squeeze, we raise tariff barriers and force the foreign countries to pay in cash, instead of in goods.

We are a great nation, a normally prosperous nation. Our industrial know-how has made it possible for our people to raise to previously unattainable heights the productive power of our man-hours of labor. But it is a sad commentary on our civilization that our politicians have wasted this increased margin of security and prosperity, which might have been shared by all, for purely destructive purposes. In two world wars, they have wiped out the material gains of more than 50 years, the accumulated spiritual heritage of a much longer period.

It is a grim and ironic fact that we simply cannot afford the luxury of politicians who quarrel incessantly among themselves, & spend riotously what does not belong to them. No private business, no individual would be allowed to write blank checks the way politicians on both sides of the Iron Curtain do with the airy belief that the taxpayers can be clubbed into assuming the burden. Peace will only be assured when taxpayers no longer will tolerate huge expenditures "for defense only" and open-end budgets without any ceilings to express pride and patriotism.

We can have the kind of life all of us desire. But only if we are willing to forego a world war every few years. If we are willing to reduce our astronomical public debt, and insist that our congressmen and state legislators live within their income as the taxpayers are forced to do. If we insist eternally that the margin of economic security—made possible by our tremendous production-efficiency—be not wasted or reduced by the stultifying tactics of labor barons, or the greedy profit motives of private capital. We can have a paradise on earth, if the moneys now spent on destruction, are invested in the art & science of better, more abundant living.

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### FUNDAMENTALS OF GOOD POETRY

By Elva Ray Harris

#### OKAY, LET'S BREAK THE RULES

If you ever get rebellious and want to begin breaking the rules, a good place to do it is in humorous verse. Don't misunderstand, please, the underlying principles of effective writing are universally the same for all forms. You select, reject, and emphasize as much in humorous verse as you do in the most serious poetry, in a short story, and in the novel.

But "the rules", those tenets that practical writers have drawn up from experience as helpful guides, for keeping to the fundamentals, can be broken, if in the special case they do not seem to apply; if they don't aid you in your selection, rejection, and emphasis. Or if as part of the fun you pointedly turn them topsy-turvy in deliberate spoof.

Perhaps the most outstanding example that we can think of is that of using overworked phrases. The rule of thumb in serious writing, "Avoid trite phrases", can be reversed completely to read: "In humorous writing, a trite phrase will often help you to put the stinger in your underscoring."

Here is an example from the SAT. EVE. POST, in which a hackneyed circumlocution is played up as a title.

#### THE HAIRS OF MY HEAD

Though once I considered the  
task insurmountable,  
Today they not only are numbered,  
they're countable!

Richard Armour

Actually, there are several clichés here, because for some reason difficult jobs frequently are referred to as: "insurmountable tasks", and "the hairs of my head are numbered" is a very familiar phrase.

It is possible not only to use trite, overworked phrases, but also to use trite situations. Here is the old familiar one about women and hats. It is from the "Pepper & Salt" column in the WALL STREET JOURNAL.

#### A CHAPEAU IS TOPS

A man when he's happy will celebrate,  
A dog will go chasing a cat,  
A rooster will crow and a whale will blow,  
But a woman will buy a hat.

A man in his sorrow will turn to drink,  
A tire when punctured goes flat,  
A preacher will pray and a horse will neigh,  
But a woman will buy a hat.

A man when he's idle finds mischief to do,

A child turns into a brat,  
An owl's a galoot who don't give a hoot,  
But a woman exchanges the hat.

Merle Beynon

You use the old familiar situation and get away with it nicely, if you contribute something novel to it yourself and end up with a neat snapper. In this one the substitution, the use of the exchange idea, in the last line did it. Two smiles and then—surprise. The two chuckles also served a double purpose by preparing you for the twist.

You can disregard the rules of spelling & grammar in humorous writing, if so doing is part of your purpose and serves to put over your effect better. This example also comes from the "Pepper and Salt" column:

#### IT ISN'T THE COLD, IT'S THE TEMPERATURE

The weather in cold Illinois  
Doesn't bother the girls or the boys,  
When it's 30 below,  
It's the darned Esquimaux  
Who is feeling so good that annois.

Merle Beynon.

The poem would stand alone with "correct" spelling, but we get an extra laugh because of the fun the author is poking at the English language. Ogden Nash toys with words in much the same way. If you would like to see some further examples by one who openly rebels against punctuation and grammar, read, if you can, e. e. cummings.

The parody is another form of rebellion & is very acceptable in humorous verse. Success of this type of writing lies in parodying a poem that is sure to be familiar to a large number of people. If your audience is not acquainted with the idea, form or the manner of writing that you are ridiculing, the humor is lost.

Another rule you can break to advantage is the one which calls for keeping your over-all style uniform, and keeping your language as simple and natural as the mode of the period against which you are writing calls for. When you write humor, you can insert wisely and to a good effect phrases culled from the poetry of an earlier day, or from a more formal kind of writing. Because I cannot put my hands quickly on another example, I'm using one of my own. It was first published a number of years ago in LIBERTY.

#### INVITATION IN 1943

My lawn chairs grace the cellar floor.  
The croquet set behind the door  
Keeps company with racquets, net,  
And shuttlecocks. This year I get  
My exercise on bended knee  
Tending corn and bean and pea.  
My skin is tanning just as well

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As when I used to lie a spell  
And read. Where once I loafed the ground  
Brings forth tomato plants. Around  
The porch squish vines have run.  
This year I'm having lots of fun!  
Come up and on the tennis court  
I'll show you quite another sport.  
Come up at four for sambric tea.  
And play the game "Pull Weeds" with me.

The underlining, of course, indicates the places where the style has deliberately, for humorous effect, been allowed to slip.

Yes, go ahead and be rebellious. Break all the rules you want to, but don't break any-fundamentals.

## VISUALIZE BEFORE YOU WRITE

By Mary Elsnau

Neophyte as well as professional writers, may receive inspiration when genius explains how its done.

One of the greatest minds of our age certainly was that of Nikola Tesla, the inventor. Before he put pen to paper, he visualized the complete machine or whatever it might be that he was concerned with. He worked with the problem mentally down to the smallest detail and watched it perform to his complete satisfaction before he drew a line on blueprint. His powers of visualization were—so well trained that the vision was as concrete to him as the material machine would be for another mind.

The book, "The Prodigal Genius" by John J. O'Neill, is a biography describing the mind and its marvellous accomplishments of Nikola Tesla, Austrian born American electrician & inventor. Here we learn how as a boy, Tesla allowed his imagination free rein. He took mental excursions beyond the small world of everyday experience.

"I went on journeys," he says, "I saw new places, cities, countries, and all the time I tried hard to make these imaginary things very sharp and clear in my mind. I imagined myself living in countries I have never before seen, and I made imaginary friends, who were very dear to me and really seemed to be alive."

When the boy was seventeen, his thoughts, not altogether strangely, turned to invention. Because he had continuously been living inside his own imagination, he found that, "To my delight...I could visualize with greatest ease." He needed no models, drawings or experiments, for he could picture them all in his mind. Tesla gave to the world what very seriously he himself considered a truly new method of materializing inventive ideas and conceptions, believing it to be of great use to any inventor, businessman or artist.

"Some people," he said, "the moment they've

a device to construct or any piece of work to perform, rush at it without adequate preparation, and immediately become engrossed with the details, instead of the central idea... They may get results, but they sacrifice the quality."

Here is how he went at it: when the longing to invent something began to gnaw at his mind, he lazily played with the idea, mulling it over in the back of his mind, while, going about his daily work, the rest of his mind was busy with other things. This "period of incubation" went on for months or even years.

At length, however, he realized he was deliberately concentrating on a possible solution of his problem. Gradually, through the process of elimination, his mind became centered on a narrowed field of investigation. This, he called, the "period of direct effort."

"Now," he told his biographer, "When I am deliberately thinking of the problem in its specific features, I may begin to feel that I am going to get the solution. And the wonderful thing is, that if I do feel this way, then I know I have really solved the problem and shall get what I am after."

The feeling that the solution is in his subconscious mind, is so convincing that he is aware he can relax and presently his conscious mind will receive the formula. His inventions were all conceived in this manner, and have always worked without a single exception, proving the power and mathematical precision of his subconscious mind.

Could a writer sit down and write in such intensely perfect confidence in his idea, using concise phraseology to express his every shade of meaning in such a manner that no editor could reject his masterpiece, and all of his work were of the same perfection, that, indeed, would be Nirvana! Well, Tesla managed this very same thing with invention, and this is as much creation as is writing, be it fiction or non-fiction.

By following Tesla's method of visualization, we writers can perhaps come nearer to receiving the checks we need and desire than rejections.

(Note: we are grateful to Miss Elsnau for this interesting little article. We believe writers do not know nearly enough about the imagination or the use of the subconscious. Our little Billy "Gee" has shown us to what a much greater extent children live in their imaginations than adults. During his "rest" periods, when he is not sleepy we hear long scenes between him and other kids. They are so well visualized that he does not bother, for the most part, to call them by name. Yet even the less imaginative parents listening in, have no difficulty in understanding which child is speaking. It is a revelation!)



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### HOW TO MAKE EDITORS LIKE YOU!

One of the first obligations of the writer is to keep his type clean, and his typewriter running smoothly. We have found that the easiest and quickest method of doing the first of these tasks is to use soap & water and follow them with inexpensive rubbing alcohol. An ordinary nail brush dipped on one end in water and rubbed with soap, does the trick of removing the grime. Follow this in quick succession with the dry end and a rag to get rid of the surplus moisture. If the gummy stuff is very tight, repeat. Then use a half-inch paint brush dipped in the alcohol. Rub the first time with your cloth, the second time with your stiff typewriter brush (this keeps your brush stiffer and free from inky grime, so it will last longer).

Give your type a couple of minutes to dry and you will be pleased with the result. It is well to have two typewriter brushes; use the oldest one for brushing the type between baths. Particularly the "w"s, "v"s, etc. In cool, dry weather this will mean less cleaning pauses. In hot, humid weather shorten up the times between thorough cleanings. You'll find that attention to this matter will (1) help you to turn out more work in a shorter time; and (2) make editors friendlier.

### NEWS FROM THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

The FTC has accepted a stipulation from the JOURNAL OF LIVING Publishing Corp., that the company will stop misrepresentations in connection with its "limited" subscription offers.

### GOOD DIALOGUE IS A FINE ART

One of the fundamentals that every writer of fiction, and non-fiction, too, should be master of is that of the mechanics of easy, natural dialogue. This comes only with long practice. Can you pump warmth and intimacy, and swift pace into your scenes? Can you in all your scenes keep it clear who is speaking, and at the same time manipulate narrative tags and adverbs so that the reader has no real sense of annoyance that they hinder him from rushing headlong through the plot?

It is a fashion of many young writers and pseudo-technicians in the realm of "art" to scoff at the magazine story, the commercial type of slick fiction. But whether these are poorly conceived, conventional in subject or tritely handled, the basic writing is usually glib and fluent. The authors know how to handle words; they choose effective words & thus visualize. They make the kind of folk who read the light fiction, thrill to the sense of living.

Even a very ordinary scene is often a complex piece of writing, particularly if in a flash it builds up color and interest; if a flow of purpose is maintained continuously, like a thread all the way through the story.

### A BOOK FOR WRITERS

MINK & RED HERRING. A. J. Liebling. Doubleday & Co. \$2.95. This is a second volume of "Wayward Press" sketches reprinted from the NEW YORKER. Mr. Liebling is one of the most acute critics of the rich, conservative and not so liberal or free American press, which contents itself with printing a syndicated, stereotyped cross-section of boiler-plate in lieu of digging up the real news and important issues of the world. Mr. Liebling still likes to remind the American Press that not one reporter for an individual paper witnessed the signing of the Armistice in the Second World War. They had to take the handout given to three syndicated news services! He has the unconcealed contempt of a good newspaperman for the commercially minded "front officer" type of publisher. There would be a lot more sting to his pieces, if he avoided more often his heavy-handed circumlocutions and facetious cynicism. Writers can learn a trick or two of how not to write from Mr. L. in his poorer and more involved moments.

### NEWS OF A GOOD FRIEND

Herschel Brickell, good friend of writers, has been seriously ill. He has had to reduce his summer schedule of appearances at a number of conferences. He is finishing the new issue of the "O. Henry Prize Stories" and he expects to be at the UNH Conference. He has promised the WCS Scholarship Fund five copies of "Writers On Writing" which will go to deserving shut-ins and libraries for same.

### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

In his foreword to the anthology of Damon Runyon stories, "Runyon First and Last" recently published, Clerk Kinnaird says Damon Runyon's name was originally Alfred Damon Runyan. But a sports editor blue pencilled the "Alfred" and a compositor inadvertently substituted an "o" for the final "a". Runyonno doubt noticed that the resulting by-line is easier to read. So he left it that way.

A writer is lucky who can pick a good by-line early in his career, and then sticks to it. Your by-line is your trade mark. Use it and fight tactfully to get editors to use it on everything you write. Try to develop one that reflects the kind of personality which you wish to present to your readers. And if possible, get one that is easy to say, easier still to spell and hard to forget.

### TRUTH IS WHERE YOU FIND IT

Under the comparatively new editorship of Ray H. Wiley and Jimmy Childers, the FORUM, monthly publication of the men of the State Prison of Nebraska, in its new pocket-sized format is becoming a very readable & thought provoking little book. Ray's article on the "Mysterious Thrill of Crime" is the best explanation of delinquency that I have seen. A lot of other good ideas are in there, too.

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### A POETRY MAGAZINE IS NOW ENDOWED

The IYRIC, Leigh Henes, Box 2052, Roanoke, Va., said to be the second oldest poetry magazine in the country, has received financial support that should insure its publication. As it enters its 30th year, it has been acquired by The Iyric Associates, Virginia K. Cummins, chairman of the board. Mr. Henes is to continue as editor, but the Foundation's purpose is to foster traditional poetry and include other educational and charitable projects. For instance, it awarded Robert Hill-yer a grant of \$1,000.

### WRITERS CAN GET IDEAS FROM THIS

A motion picture that is a good feature—and so of interest to writers—has just been released. It is called "What is a Co-op?" & uses the feature article method of defining what co-operatives are and how they work. A print can be secured through regional coops or the Cooperative League, 343 So. Dearborn St., Chicago 4, Illinois.

### A BOOK FOR WRITERS

LITERARY MARKET PLACE, 1949. Anne J. Richter. R. R. Bowker Co. \$5.50. This is a directory rather than a market list. But it is better organized than ever before and contains more useful information. A very valuable tool.

### THE BULLETIN BOARD

ARCO PUBLISHING CO., 480 Lexington Ave., NYC 17, "listed in a recent writers' magazine as publishing juveniles of any length, sent back a ms. with a note stating that they do not handle juveniles any longer," says Mrs. Iva Blanchard Bates.

CHRISTIAN LIFE LETTERS also sent back mss recently, with a note that its "out of publication," according to Carrie Esther Hammil, in spite of the fact that a writer's market volume, recently revised, carries it, & the editor when questioned, stated she'd queried it and had no information of its suspension. (REWRITE warned that this wasn't a satisfactory market months ago.)

CHRISTIAN LIFE, 434 So. Wabash Ave., Chicago 5, Ill., is listed in the Writers' Handbook as a fiction market for stories, built around "evangelical Christian people & situations. Lengths: short shorts 500 to 1,000 words; short stories: 2,000 to 3,000 words. Pays 1c. before publication. Robert Walker is the editor."

We have received a copy of the first issue of OUR NEW MAGAZINE, Ethel Maguffey, Box 75, Kissimmee, Fla., one more in the long procession of amateur journalism. Miss Maguffey is business manager of Paul Pross' similar magazine. Like that publication, this one has a militant editorial policy in favor of you writers. But it takes hard cracks at the poets & poetry editors who pat each other the

right way with fulsome praise and a respect for "long lists of previous publications, that don't mean a darn thing. They write you on a letterhead plastered with lists of the various organizations they belong to. If the facts were known, the magazines wouldn't exist if it were not for the copies purchased by the people who write for them. You can't call it a "racket" because they don't demand a subscription as a price for being accepted. But it certainly is something less than legitimate publication, when the writers have never been able to attract any readers to the magazine besides themselves."

I do not know who wrote that blast to the editor of OUR NEW MAGAZINE. But there's a lot of truth to it. You and I know many periodicals, especially in the poetry field, that perpetuate that particular kind of mediocrity. And they continue to exist because some writers are content to get published in the easy way of thinking that they are writers, because they belong to enough organizations and have their poems printed in the community newspaper's "paste up" column. The editors of these never refuse anything so long as it is written in English and the thought is not completely obscured in a haze of illiteracy.

The older I grow, the more I realize that one test of whether you are a writer is the ability to knock on a strange editor's door and sell him a bill of goods. It may not be art, but however humble the acceptance, and the check, it proves you can write. There are quite a few big name authors who would never qualify according to that definition. We know many small writers and housewives, who write in the spare moments whenever they can. But to our minds, to Elva and Bill, they're more nearly writers than some of the bigger and better known authors, who get the credit for being distinguished Personages. They write because they have to write; it is the "way of life" for them that makes them free from their routine day-to-day existence. We get a real thrill watching these pioneers put their thoughts down on paper, having an idea worth saying, then laboriously digging up a market and making the story, article, poem, or what-have-you stick because it is good!

### DOES A WRITER HAVE TO BE RUTHLESS?

For one reason or another recently Elva & I have been running up against the theme: a writer has to be ruthless in order to exist and to put over his work. Willa Cather made that the core of one of her greatest novels about 33 years ago, it was "The Song of the Lark", which is now unfortunately no longer in print. It was the story of how a star in the Metropolitan Opera Company fights to get to the top. Miss Cather called it "passion" but Thea was ruthless to herself as well as her friends.

More ruthlessness, nevertheless, will not ever get you the prize you wish. Miss Cath-

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er herself was an example of that in handling the theme. She pressed too hard, made a too sharp division between the good life on the one hand, and the evil on the other that permits the sands of life to run recklessly through one's fingers. Read today, "The Song of the Lark" seems at times naively didactic. Yet many of its great scenes still have magic fire in them. The portraits of people in the music world are uncannily accurate—not only for their outer physical presentiments, but also for Willa Cather's creative understanding of their inner beings and instinctive make-up. All of them are types in a sense, symbolizing certain eternally universal kinds of artist that one will always find wherever those gifted with the ability to create may gather. But that very symbolizing (dramatic illustration you might call it, while it tends to make pawns of characters instead of allowing them to live their own lives, is thrilling because of the "inside" picture it gives the lay reader. Miss Cather failed only because she lacked the emotional imagination or sensitivity to give her men and women their freedom after she'd planned the great parts they were to play.. In after years she got this quality to much greater extent. But all her life she suffered from an inability to plot, to tell a story within the great design or framework of a character and background that her rich mind was able to summon up.

There is another type of ruthlessness. I can illustrate it for you by a story we saw not long ago. It was about a writer who had gone to visit his wife in a summer resort, a rather famous one; he was extended friendly courtesies by the "natives" because his wife had won their somewhat critical respect and appreciation. Mr. Front Page let them "show their stuff", then he went back to town and did a very funny satirical sketch of it all and got himself a by-line. He most bust his britches, too, calling his wife to tell her how proud he was. In the story she wasn't exactly happy over the whole proceeding.

Obviously, that kind of "ruthlessness" is not calculated to permanently advance writers, although quite a number I could identify for you, have achieved a flurry of best-seller fame and shekels that way. But often this prestige is fleeting; today's sensation is here today, gone tomorrow. Yes, a writer has to be ruthless, but in a very different manner. If you press too hard on the material side and lose sight of the spiritual, a realizable dream may go up in smoke. A good argument can be made for the statement that the great themes, the deep, universal dramas are always moral issues. Even the bang-bang pulp expresses the child-like faith of that type of reader that Good will always win out in the end. The happy ending is the satisfying one that we all desire and fear will not eventuate.

And so you will find that all great creative artists are ruthless, but at the iden-

tical moment selfless. It is not for greedy or selfish personal motives that they exercise that passion to which Willa Cather referred. They would go on writing even if no reader ever showed interest in their wares. A story takes hold of them and they must of necessity tell it. Their desire to amuse, to hold in suspense, to spread the word of the good life is as instinctive as that prompting the squirrels to plant nuts, that God's great creative dream may be fulfilled. Real passion in the sense that Miss Cather probably intended it: strong emotion, backed by strong rationalized desire, ambition, direction, is an almost unstoppable force. Army disciplinarians know that if they can cause their men to believe in and feel the rightness of their job, they will have no difficulty in spurring them on to fight. Only emotion backed by righteous intellect forces men to kill and writers to write. (A man in one of the Federal penitentiaries told me a few days ago that he is writing a novel the hard way. He sits on his cell cot one night every week and writes with pencil and a pad on his knee. Would you have that determination? I know a little of what he feels, because for four long years I wrote in public buildings, often standing up or sitting on a stairway or park bench during noon hours.) A writer works if you give him tools or don't. Carrie Jacobs Bond wrote songs even before a place to sing or sell them was revealed.

## HOUSECLEANING IS IN ORDER

Both REWRITE and WRITERS' NEWSLETTER by a coincidence editorialized on the same identical subject last month. We both deplored a fact of which writers are becoming increasingly aware: the lack of responsibility the writers' and many allied trade magazines appear to have as regards advertising from unreliable critics, agents, mail-order houses selling expensive and inferior "courses", & song publishing rackets. (Not one in a thousand of the latter has any practical value or justification for appealing to writers. Yet their ads. are accepted by certain writers' magazines.) Standards are very, very low.

In her editorial, Jessye Russell publicly rebuked both EDITOR & PUBLISHER and SATURDAY REVIEW OF LITERATURE for accepting an adv. from a critic-agent whose fee arrangements had already been reported unfavorably in REWRITE. We regret to state that the HERALD TRIBUNE (NYC) should also be added to the list, and that for several years it has regularly carried small ads. from printers the publishing trade as a whole has long recognized as vanity publishers. It is also very unfortunate that certain of the small magazines, which are largely supported by inexperienced writers, accept this type of monetary addition to their slender incomes.

We believe everyone is entitled to earn a legitimate living from writing. There is an opportunity for real service. But no room—for charlatans or evaders of responsibility.

## REWRITE

### A SPOTLIGHT ON LITTLE MAGAZINES

GALLEY, Whipple McClay, Proof, Inc, Box 190, North Hollywood, Calif. 50c. per copy, \$1.50 per year (Quarterly). This is something new that writers can use. Vol. 1, No. 1 is called by its publishers, "The First Annual Little Magazine Directory—the Little Magazine for Little Magazine Publishers". It defines a little magazine as follows:

"A periodical currently published in the U.S. more often than annually, primary purpose of which is the non-commercial advancement of literature, art, poetry and/or drama and is unrestricted as to source of contributions and circulation."

Although it is not a market list, GALLEY, actually, can serve writers well as a listing of the physical make-up of the many magazines listed, because it tells just how a periodical is edited and gives the purposes in the editors' own words. Moreover, the editor of GALLEY states: "There are many praise worthy aspects of the field that should receive more publicity, and there are some conditions that need rectifying. GALLEY's basic purpose is to function as a penetrating, impartial spotlight showing up both."

As such, it can serve writers well and we are glad to welcome its appearance. We hope it will fulfill such laudable intentions. A revised edition now planned annually, while the other three issues will bring a supplement of additions, suspensions and changes. In the first issue there are a few surprising omissions and inclusions, which I would want to check for 100% accuracy. But by and large it appears like a serviceable list, a list with no vital errors that time will not gradually repair.

### REDUCE THE "WASTE TIME" IN PAPER WORK

Efficiency experts in industry continually try to save even one small handling of a product in its manufacture. They say that a second, of some high priced laborer's time is often worth thousands of dollars a year, if the waste motion is repeated endlessly hundreds of times a day, thousands every month or year. Well, if this is true for industry why can't it be applicable also to writers? My experience tells me that it is. That is, I know that I save myself many hours yearly by trying always to work on a clean desk, to reduce the complexity and handling of paper work.

You can't always keep your desk clean. You need notes to write. Sometimes you are sure to be called away, or you lack time to make decisions about cleaning up right after you have finished a specific job. But the better you succeed in cleaning up after writing one assignment and before starting another, the greater will be your efficiency, and the more fluent generally your style. Involved, obscure sentences too often are the inevit-

### HOW'S YOUR BATTING AVERAGE?

Here is a chance for you to compete for a number of small prizes on a friendly basis. The WCS Family includes all of you who read REWRITE or patronize any of our services. By helping us to write this column and reporting your experiences with editors (both good and bad), you aid us in bringing you a vivid and specific picture of the markets, and which editors have bought what within thirty days or less. Some of our reports are in your hands in less time than that!

Helen Miller Swift  
Short Short: LETTER.

Mary Galayda  
Filler: CUR DUMB ANIMALS.

Edward W. Ludwig  
True Exp. Article: DAILY MEDITATION.

Isabel M. Wood  
Poems: FORWARD, MESSENGER OF THE SACRED HEART (3). (She writes: "I am just a slow, slow, steady plodder, so I have sold only 44 poems this winter.")

Charlotte Norlin  
Articles: Topeka CAPITAL and Hutchinson Herald (Kansas newspapers).

Sarah M. Price  
Space reporter: for a Paterson, N.J. paper; she also does publicity for the local P.T.A. and sells juvenile and adult articles; also some juvenile fiction, & takes care of 3 children!

Our file of 1-page background histories is growing. Keep us informed of what you're doing, so we can help you to make more sales. The more we know about your work, the better we can advise you how to expand & grow.

Be a Minute Man! The more you report your knowledge of markets, the more you help us to confirm changes, trends, new markets. Thus, we can bring you the best news first!

able result of inability to concentrate. Concentration cannot be achieved when you work on a disorderly desk. (A desk can be so neat that no one could possibly write creatively on it.) For those for whom time is a precious and rare commodity, it is doubly important, naturally, that the best use of time be always made. It is surprising what you can do in a few minutes, if you don't have to make a place for the typewriter; if you aren't required to put away irrelevant notes, papers related to domestic bills, junior's lessons and so on.

Paper-work is grand when you feel down-in-the-mouth. It is something to do. Getting a batch of it done will raise your vitality. A wise writer will have his desk and files so organized that he can do his paper-work the easiest way possible. Don't rehandle stuff!



## REWRITE

### SELLING IS A FINE ART

The art of selling mss. is truly an art—one that too few writers make any effort to master. The usual technique is to shoot for a few of the top slicks, then throw the ms. into a drawer and try another idea. That is the way to collect rejection slips, but not checks. And at the present rate of exchange a junk man won't give you much for your old mss. or rejection slips. Even small checks, you'll find, are worth more. And there's no reason why you should not pick up a few. You only need commonsense and the ability to do a passable job as a feature writer.

The first thing is to make a realistic inventory as to what you have to sell, whether your writing will satisfy the editors you've got a mind to attack, and what they seem to be using. The oldest rule in selling is one about the editor being always right. And the next is that he will almost always pat your shoulder and shriek with joy, if you submit a ms. that is a carbon copy of the thing he has already been buying, but with some novel twist. In other words, you sell him just exactly the same kind of product, but with a new label, or in a new package.

This may sound cynical. It isn't meant to be. It is only sound commonsense. Whenever I have tackled a new market, or one of your humble correspondent's writer friends tries to hit a particular market, I get myself an armful of the latest back copies. I look at them without reading a word. I study them—make-up, pictures, advs., every physical or editorial quirk. Then I begin to read slowly and carefully. I decide what I think the editor is buying and why. I try to guess if it is time for a slightly new treatment, or the entry of a new feature. I make it my idea to understand the way that editor's mind works, and again why. Then I scheme to sell him a well written piece that seems new, but is in the groove for what he has been opening his pocketbook.

And don't forget that no one ever consciously stands still either mentally, or emotionally. There is an extension to ideas. A story generates interest in a theme. Readers' minds move forward. They want to see a conversation develop, go in some direction. So, although it is not obviously visible on the surface, there is an underlying continuity of thought in everything that an editor publishes. The short stories are not actually connected, but one story often gives the editor the idea for running another. In working on stories for clients, I often say to myself and the client: "What would happen if"... We change the circumstances slightly or alter the character-traits and presto, a new story idea develops. The same thing, of course, happens in a magazine. The editorial staff sees last month they ran a story about the single girl who has an affair with a married man. So, one of the editors says: "Why don't we run one soon from the angle of

the wife, or the husband. Or another one of the editors points out that traditionally a single girl is always a vamp stealing trespassing on the wife's preserves. But let us suppose she is the sympathetic character, a nice girl, who just happens to have met the husband too late. Yes, one situation, character, theme or what-have-you leads to many others. You are smart to analyze very carefully lines of thought and emotion that have unconsciously been set up in a magazine. An editor himself is perhaps not aware of them. But if you project them, and submit a story that falls neatly within the framework some months ahead, the editor will recognize immediately that it is just what he wants. He will think that he is editing creatively. (I would just keep silent and hug myself. But if I can do it once, I would tell myself, I can do it again!)

The matter of timing submissions opens up a whole chapter of possibilities for making or missing a sale. Many writers, for example, try to slug an editor into sending them one of his checks. They put half-a-dozen mss. in the mail in one envelop, or they slam a new one at him every day for weeks on end. The sight of a familiarly illegible ms. or badly typed carbon can turn an editor's disposition for a whole day. It is vitally important at the very outset to create an atmosphere wherein the editorial reader picks up your ms. with eagerness and curiosity rather than loathing.

Therefore, it is well to plan your method of attack carefully. You would not like any person who put his finger down on your bell and kept it ringing, or in other ways might make a nuisance of himself. Therefore, discover whether you are capable of hitting an editor's book. Be objectively honest in estimating your own powers. Then space the arrival of your mss., so that the editor will not feel that you are trying to "monopolize" his magazine for your interests alone. Don't forget that he has to serve many other writers and a wide variety of readers. Make it seem a privilege, not a chore, to read your mss.

When you have an editor interested in the type of mss. you submit, then is the time to exercise extra special care. If you send him a piece that almost sticks, and then follow it with a dud, you make it twice as hard to rewarn his enthusiasm. If he writes you the personal letter you have been hoping for, it is just commonsense to scrutinize that letter until you know it by heart. Don't make any mistakes. Understand what prompted that unbending. Try to meet him half-way, try to prove you're worthy of his friendship. Many editors will say "no" but if you are smart, you can rewrite and earn an acceptance. You need to exercise the wisdom of a Solomon to avoid making a fool of yourself or bothering the editor with a poor revise. It is a real triumph when they change their minds and say to you: "That's a good revise." They like you!

## REWRITE

### "MUST" READING FOR EDITORS

With the present tight market for mss. of all kinds likely to continue for some time, the eternal problem of editorial reception of a ms. and report on same, becomes more important than ever. Many editors take considerable pains to be considerate. Others do not seem to care in the least. Handling a large volume of ms. mail is no easy task. But the trick can be done, and is done by some editors who realize the importance of good relations with the public. A writer once making up his mind that he has been kicked all over the place, can have quite an effect on circulation. In these days of dropping circulations, it would seem as if the brighter advertising and promotion departments ought to get after the editors to treat the writers at least as decently as army mules.

Here is a reasonable and thoughtful short piece we received the other day from a subscriber to REWRITE, who is a housewife, and a selling writer in her spare moments. Every editor ought to read it and ponder upon it carefully:

"About editors. Especially 'slow' editors. I realize, as most people do, that any editor is a very busy person. But it goes beyond reason and the bounds of mere irritation if an editor keeps a story a long time, so you are practically spending the money, and then flips it back without explanation.

"It seems to me that, busy as they are, editors could write a personal 'Sorry' at the very least. JUNIORS (they have published my stories) returned one after 11 weeks; TEENS (they have also published mine) returned one after more than 13 weeks, and only when I'd ventured an inquiry; in this case, the note explaining took some of the sting out of an otherwise sour experience. AMERICAN GIRL returned one of mine recently after 13 weeks, with only a formal rejection. They must have liked something about the story, to keep it that long!

"The trouble is that you just don't know, in these cases, whether they were really pondering over your story, or whether they buried it in the bottom of a drawer! You don't know whether to send it the rounds, or tear it up and start over! Even though they don't have much time, and don't wish to become involved in 'correspondence', they could write a word or two, so you would know where your ms. stands in relation to the market."

REWRITE agrees heartily with this practical and constructive criticism of editors. A free lance writer has to scratch to live. I believe that more and more editors appreciate that their valued contributors come from these writers. Therefore, very slowly it is becoming standard practice to use a form or chart that can be checked as to reasons for the return of mss. The imaginative editors, I think, know what it is to be a writer!

### A NEW TRADE NEWS MAGAZINE

ART MATERIAL TRADE NEWS, Philip M. Rubins, 127 No. Dearborn St., Chicago 2, Ill., is a new trade book exclusively for the "artist-supply" field. It is open for copy from free lance writers. Copy can be 500—1,000 words but must be slanted toward dealers, manufacturers and wholesalers in the art materials fields. Examples: the inside story of a pigment factory, covering the marketing & manufacturing. Opening of a new art materials, or sales plant. An interview with an important person in the art materials field, and a look around an artist supply store. A research paper on the making of water colors.

Our rate is 2¢. per word, upon acceptance. Pictures should accompany each story, writer to be reimbursed for same."

This magazine's letterhead states it is an Edward H. Ellison publication. None of the writers' market lists mention this firm.

### ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE COINCIDENCES

In our last issue we had a piece on authors' records. In the May-June issue, Authors' League Bulletin, Rex Stout, executive editor, discusses this same subject from a different angle. He makes the very good point, about which few writers think sufficiently. It is that part of the job of keeping writers' records has to do with protecting their property.

Stout states that he was appalled to find that several writers whom he tested weren't able to answer all or several of the basic, or minimum questions that a writer or his agent ought to be able to answer about every one of his works. These questions are:

- (1) Who has the copyright?
- (2) What rights have been sold or licensed, and to whom, and when do they revert to me?
- (3) What were the terms of the sale, or license?
- (4) Have all sums due been paid to me?
- (5) What should be done and when (e.g., get assignment of copyright from magazine)?

Of course this is not the whole story but it serves to show why accurate records make an important foundation to any writer's affairs with editors. Stout makes the practical point for instance, that a writer ought always to copy any terms printed on a check about the sale, because this forms a contract which is binding as soon as the writer puts his signature under it.

It is articles such as these that make it extremely worthwhile for a writer to belong to the Authors' League of America, 6 E. 39th NYC 16. I don't agree with everything which the league does, but only by sticking unitedly together will writers ever improve the conditions under which they work.

## REWRITE

### PRIZE PLAY CONTEST

CONTEMPORARY THEATRE SHORT PLAY CONTEST.  
257 East Kirby St., Detroit 2, Mich. Prizes of \$25, \$15 and \$10, with additional royalties of \$5 for half-hour plays, \$2 for less than half-hour skits and blackouts. Social themes (with satire, humor and music especially desired). Additional mss. may be taken and will receive the same royalties. To assure complete impartiality, contestants are asked to clip names and addresses separately. These and mss. will then be numbered so that names may be withheld from the judges. Contest closes: July 25, 1949.

### THE BULLETIN BOARD

This month a world-wide copyright pact is expected to come out of the meeting of copyright experts in Paris, starting July 5th. A new pact will create a situation because at present America is not a member of the Berne Treaty group which includes most of the nations of the world. Incidentally, our copyright law was broadened in the present session of Congress by passage of the so-called Celler copyright bill, which permits the ad interim copyright of foreign works within six months of home publication.

Recently we received in the same envelope: two circulars, (1) from a critic-agent, who charges both reading fees & the 10% authors' agent commissions; (2) from a publishing company (same identical address). This second firm offers to "edit" or type the mss. submitted, "if necessary, at a nominal cost." A similar service is offered by the critic-agent. This publisher then adds this revealing note: "We do not distribute books. We believe all profits from the sale of books—should go to the author." (Mental note: what reasonable chance for "profit" is there, if the author lacks a good distributor?) This firm cheerily adds, however, that it will be glad to plan a campaign to help "YOU sell & promote your book effectively." (Again, at a nominal cost presumably.) Now isn't the ordinary person with bills to pay apt under a set-up like that to suggest that same is not saleable and it would be wise for the author to publish it himself? Any agent who offers prospective clients twin mailing pieces such as these, is certainly working under a terrific handicap and making it very difficult to believe in his sincerity.

We are frequently asked by new writers if we can explain how their names get on sucker lists. The answer is: (1) when they sign coupons or cards intended to bring them the latest "free trial offer". (2) a highly respectable southern poetry society made public recently the names of several hundred newly admitted members. Every last one of them is going to receive several "exciting offers", I'll wager, within a matter of weeks. Vanity publishers chortled with glee, when they clutched that list. There are writers, we've discovered, who are glad to pass such lists

along to their vanity publisher friends. (I would rather sweep up skill myself. It is a cleaner way to make a buck.)

Here is a thought we gleaned from a folder being distributed by the—Braille Poets' Guild, Inc. 5 Main St., Taunton, Mass. (It is seeking funds to carry on its work.)

"All that we send into the lives of others comes back into our own."

A fine thought for writers!

### HERE IS AN IDEA!

Edith Grant, president of the Ms. Club of Boston, makes part of her writing income by lecturing. Her four subjects, designed as a cross-section of interest for women's clubs, garden clubs and church groups, has a careful plan behind it that other writers might well follow. Her first is a hobby lecture—given either by itself or in conjunction with a club show. Her second, a humorous one, is built around a husband's retirement. Third: spices, where they come from and how grown. Fourth: ancient, famous and curious wills.

Any writer could add other specialties to his routine. This list, however, gives coverage of a cross-section of general interest which is important, when you are trying for a wide appeal. Editors of magazines attempt to catch readers in the same way. Lecturing can be good experience for a writer because it brings him into direct contact with readers and teaches him the need, and devices for catching and holding a reader or group.

Miss Grant uses a simple single sheet flyer that states her list and offers her picture. This is susceptible of use in several ways for promotion. It need not be very expensive. Lectures can earn a writer publicity that may bring him to the attention of a number of editors. Book publishers especially weigh the popularity of a lecturer in the balance and often consider it a safe bet for possible sales. (Witness: John Mason Brown—popular dramatic critic, who has extended his interests to other fields.)

Don't overlook the danger of loose fluency. Remember what Charlie Morton, editorial staff member of the ATLANTIC MONTHLY, wrote, with some asperity, and which we quoted last month, about author-lecturers. You never exercise the same stylistic supervision, when talking, especially informally, that you do when writing. The result, as in much of the hastily written newspaper writing, is a surface glibness that makes for hard reading. A tendency toward carelessness creeps in that is death to any permanent quality. Constant vigilance and an eye and ear tuned to the eternal, universal truths of life, that's the price you must expect to pay, if you intend to be read ten, twenty, a hundred years from now. No one can consciously write for readers of the future. But you can prepare.

## REWRITE

### SARAH ORNE JEWETT TALKS ON WRITING

I have been reading once more the letters of Sarah Orne Jewett, who was one of the ATLANTIC MONTHLY's most popular authors about the turn of the last century. For around 40 years of her life (she died at 60), she did beautiful, gem-like sketches of the country folk she knew so well in her native village of South Berwick, Me. This year is the 100th anniversary of her birth, the 40th of a sad and premature death.

Apparently even in those days there was a host of inexperienced would-be writers, who sought advice from established authors. All through Miss Jewett's letters are scattered bits of sage advice born of her experience. Here is one sample:

"Tell Mrs. R—that the only way is to keep at work! If I were she I should read half a dozen really good and typical stories—over and over! (She mentions one of Maupassant's "for pathos and tragic directness," some of Miss Thackeray's fairy stories, "old fashioned romance put into modern terms," one of Mary E. Wilkins' New England farm stories, a story or two by Alphonse Daudet. She would probably refer to equally timely stories in this age, were she alive today. Ed.) These are all typical and well proportioned in themselves and very well managed. I speak of them because they come readily to my mind, & give one clear ideas of a beautiful way of doing things. One must have one's own method: it's the personal contribution that makes a true value in any form of art or work of any sort.

"I could write much about these things, but I do not much believe that it is worthwhile to say anything, but keep at work! If something comes into a writer's, or a painter's mind the only thing is to try it, to see what one can do with it, and give it a chance to show if it has real value. Story writing is always experimental, just as water color is, and that something which does itself is the vitality of it. I think we must know what a good piece of work is, before we can do good work of our own. And so I say, study work that the best judges have called good, and see why it is good; whether it is, in a particular story, the reticence or the bravery of speech, the power of suggestion that is in it, or the absolute clearness and finality of revelation; whether it sets you—thinking, or whether it makes you see a landscape with a live human figure living its own life in the foreground."

### FINE MARKET FOR RELIGIOUS ARTICLES

DAILY MEDITATION, Wm. P. Taylor, 940 Vance Jackson, San Antonio 1, Texas, "is a friendly, quick-reporting market, a monthly using non-sectarian religious articles. Pays \$-10."

This is a good, factual report by WCS Minute Men Edward W. Ludwig. Other members of the WCS Family have sold this market.

### THE WCS CIRCULATING LIBRARY

We are asked from time to time whether the WCS Circulating Library has a list of books available. We don't for the very simple reason that most of the books reviewed monthly are turned into the library. Also, one dollar of the \$2.00 annual fee is used to purchase new books or additional copies of the most popular titles. Thus, the list changes rapidly.

We urge readers to send in their own list and we will check these off as rapidly as we can. We have recently set up additional records so that we know where every book is, & this is increasing the turn-over. We haven't placed a limit on the number of books readers can receive in a year. Many readers ask us to send them fresh copies. If they like a particular book, they retain it and send in the purchase price. Thus they retire it from circulation and we replace it. In this way library helps many writers to stock working reference libraries of their own, but without buying books they may find do not prove satisfactory.

Patrons of the WCS Circulating Library can keep books a month, with time for delivery. They pay postage both ways either by a small deposit or by enclosing postage in the book when they return it. The library is a public service we are glad to operate at no profit to ourselves. It serves writers and readers alike and builds royalties for those writer folk who write the kind of books the readers of REWRITE like to read. These are not only the books about writing. Many other subjects have been covered in the course of 3 years.

### ARE YOU A "JOINER"?

A Round Robin, of which Elmer M. Howard, Box 3635, Phoenix, Arizona, is the spokesman, is looking for one additional member, to close up the ranks. (Clarence Huffman, poet and a longtime member of the WCS Family, has been forced to drop out because of illness. We're sorry to hear this sad news.) Anyone who is interested, write in as above.

Incidentally, "EM's" description of Round Robin No 1 in the WCS Family is such a fine and soundly healthy one, that we quote it:

"We enjoy life, like to write about it, to discuss our experiences, what we are doing, rib each other and criticize each others' mistakes constructively. We don't go in for high hat stuff. We are hometown livingroom friends—from Pasadena to Passaic; from an Irish gal in Chicago to a dentist down Texas way."

Sounds like the WCS Family itself! Several members of this group are members of our Gang, others are not. There are several Robins within our Family, of which this is the oldest. Quite a few of the friendships developed from reading REWRITE. We like to assist these groups in every way we can.



## REWRITE

### WHAT IS HIGH PRODUCTION?

One of the first fundamentals of successful writing and selling is always and eternally "production". If you do not turn out a fair and regular amount of copy, you simply are not a writer. Elva and I know dozens of writers who are "one book" or "one story" or one ms. writers of one kind or another. All their effort is put into placing that lone, often unsalable ms. They will be delighted, of course, to write some more, when the ms. they have labored on so hard, has been turned over and a profit made on it. It is the sad truth, however, that buying and selling in the hard boiled commercial market is not done that way. Readers have an unfortunate, unkind habit of buying only what seems novel or timely or entertaining at the moment, given the special circumstances. They won't buy in 1949 what they would have bought during wartime or in 1947.

Many writers are inelastic, inflexible in adapting themselves to conditions. I watch writers revising and revising certain mss., as if there were a 100% quality of absolute rightness, which if achieved would make the particular ms. automatically salable. Perhaps the SEP is interested in the subject at the moment, but the writer just doesn't have the experience or write well enough to make a sale. Ten years from now he will have the experience, but conditions will be radically different. It could be that the magazine (hardly the SEP!) will not even be published any more.

The point I am making is that any "story" is relatively unimportant, but the skill of an author to write reasonably well and tell an important story under any conditions, is the quality of performance that editors actually buy. They are thinking only in terms of what they want and need. But the writers who can, like Bob Hope, for example be funny on the great stage of a Broadway theater or an overturned crate in the North African desert, is a trouper whom they will quickly grow to depend upon. More than most comics, Bob Hope proved during the war years that he could be funny under difficult conditions—but he could also adapt himself to more serious moments. Perhaps it was his writers or his manager, but he got the credit for that rare quality of really effective adaptability which makes any entertainer indispensable.

The first element of successful production thus becomes an ability to gauge one's flare for developing useful ideas. It is less important to be able to turn out one good ms. than to decide whether at any given time it's better to concentrate on articles, fillers, fiction or what-have-you. Elva and I as often as not have helped some writer, who was banging his head against a stone wall in the adult fiction field, to sell juvenile short stories; or to sell articles, when he tried unsuccessfully to knock out a novel. Now it

is not always necessary to give up a dream. Many of these writers were not ready to try the kind of thing they were tackling.

Production may or may not imply the turning out of large quantities of mss. For the pulp writer it naturally does mean multiple thousands of words a week. But for the better type of slick writer it would mean perhaps averaging only one story a month. Furthermore, there is the distinction between, let us say for example, the writer who does 10,000 words a week and sells none of it, & the author who writes 5,000 words a week, of which he sells perhaps 4,000. Which is producing more?

And then there is the question of regularity. One writer may produce several stories, all done in a short space of time, then not do another for months. Obviously, the writer who produces a smaller amount of generally salable copy, but does it regularly as an alarm clock, will get further in the longer ranges of time. And how does a writer do under pressure. Suppose his agent calls him & asks him to fill a hole for an editor on an instant's notice. Does he get "flusterated," or does he step into the breach and do well under pressure? Some writers just cannot do anything when pushed. Others accept a challenge. This naturally figures into any estimate of a writer's production ratio.

Finally, there is the problem of what the writer does during his "bad moments". Every worker with words has times when his energy is low. He does not feel like writing or doing anything else. At such moments you will usually be able to get a rather good evaluation of the temperament, working habits, & production chances of a writer. If he "sits on his hands" and waits for his luck to alter, his production record will likely be a low one. If he does desk work and planning, against the time when his energy returns, he is a safe bet. Many of us who have had news training, know that there are types of work that anyone can hack out, if he has even an elementary ability to arrange words in simple sentences.

I'm always amused during discussions over style at writers' conferences, because many of the so-called literary critics talk very vaguely about "style". What they mean is the writer has never learned to value words, to consider them as sharp-edged tools, or as an artistic medium capable of employing decorative design and imaginative poetry. The pedestrian newspapermen on the other hand are sublimely unaware that there is anything to writing beyond opening one's typewriter and letting the fingers fly and the mouth "run" on. (A lot of folk who haven't had newspaper training think so, too!)

Moreover, there is always that spirit of: "manana", which prompts the human race to do their dreams Tomorrow. A genius is simply a man who gets his dreams done Today.

## REWRITE

### THINK OF THE READER FIRST

One of the interesting things about Kenneth Roberts' book, "I Wanted to Write" is a tendency to fall between two stools. He has written uncompromisingly for himself, not for either the general reader or writers. I believe a careful study of this book would be very helpful to other writers. It ought to teach them a lot about slanting. A smarter guy would have tucked in more anecdotes which the non-professional reader would have been glad to repeat and thus help sell the book. Specific hints about writing, editing, selling would have sold a lot of copies to many writers. Neither of these methods of slanting would have cheapened the book. Directly to the contrary, they would have made it an enormously more useful book.

This is not to say that "I Wanted to Write" is not a very valuable book for writers. It contains a lot of inside know-how about the job of writing and publishing. But Kenneth Roberts, an irascible, nervous temperament, keeps his eye on himself rather than reader folk. This in itself is a signal lesson for other writers. They can learn a great deal, too, from the way he omits specific details when these would help a lot. It is commendable modesty, but exasperating at times for readers who would like to learn from his experience.

But the greatest lesson Roberts teaches is in connection with rewriting and revisions. He sweats hard when he writes. He makes all of his writing seem the hardest kind of labor. Which it is under the best of favorable conditions. But one questions seriously the necessity of so much "slashing". I believe writers can learn a great deal about saying it right the first time instead of the second or third or forty-fourth time from even a cursory reading of Mr. Roberts' trials. A historical writer is at a disadvantage, because he has to have so many facts where he can handle them effectively. But it is nevertheless true that a writer will see practical examples again and again in "I Wanted to Write" of how more careful digesting the facts and the feeling of the story saves the author lots of wearisome trouble later when galley and page proofs start coming in. And for a longtime newspaperman, Mr. Roberts is strangely plagued by words. Every writer is wise to master them early in his career.

### PUBLICATION WILL NOT "MAKE" WRITERS

The other day a friend of ours sent us an adv. for another new "first stories" monthly magazine. This one is for short shorts. A number of prizes totalling \$50, are awarded in each issue. This kind of thing is tackled every so often. The only one that's made a place for itself is WRITERS' REJECTS, which pays for every ms. it accepts, according to our understanding.

Trouble with this type of project is that

### THE BULLETIN BOARD

The Lewiston JOURNAL Magazine, Faunce Pendexter, Lewiston, Me., "no longer uses poetry," according to its editor.

OREGONIAN VERSE, The Oregonian, Ethel Romig Fuller, Portland 3, Ore., says that "seasonal verse must reach us 3 months in advance, or it is too late."

SWING, Mori Greiner, 1102 Scarritt Bldg., Kansas City 6, Mo., reported to WCS "Minute Men" Whit Sawyer that it would be out of the market until late July. It has abolished one or two departments and is using more article and filler material. Brushed its format up, too. You need to study a few copies for the style that Mori Greiner uses. Nice editor.

As we went to press two important conferences had been planned and were in process of being held in the Philadelphia area. First, the second annual Christian Editors' & Writers' Conference met June 13-17. It was sponsored again by the Northern Baptist Convention, but brought together many editors and writers for other religious papers.

The Regional Writers' Conference, June 22, 23, 24, was the outgrowth of several clubs, writers and other interested persons getting together and working cooperatively and hard (see our P. 1 article). REWRITE and WRITERS' BOOK CLUB were represented through a number of sample copies of the former and circulars of "WRITERS ON WRITING". Several members of the steering committee are members of our WCS Family, so we were kept in close confidence as to the ripening plans and did our bit in urging the Committee on. Apparently, success was practically assured.

CHRISTIAN AUTHORS' GUILD, Edith F. Osteyee, 308 E. Jefferson St., Media, Pa., seems to be the one exception so far to REWRITE'S strict rule born of sad experience, not to approve any correspondence course in writing. We've been given the background of this specialized group in confidence, "off the record". But it's an open secret that the idea developed last year at the first of the two conferences we have mentioned above. Therefore, its preparation & help is more thorough & practical.

most of them are founded on two sadly illogical errors of fact: (1) that readers might be interested in a magazine for inexperienced beginners; (2) that "nation-wide" publicity can "make" a writer. It can't--unless a writer has something worth selling. On the contrary, it can hurt you in editors' eyes, to be branded as an incompetent. (Incidentally, free copies to 50 editors of national magazines is scarcely "nation-wide" publicity! And free criticism from other writers, one of the attractions frequently presented by promoters of these magazines, can be the worst possible crutch for a serious writer, if those critics are inexperienced, incompetent craftsmen no better than himself.

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### SOME NEWS AND AN IDEA

The Writers' Workshop of the Jewish Peoples Institute, Chicago, Ill., of which Edwin I. Brooks is advisor, is planning an annual anthology under the editorship of Vick Westman, who also edits the Jay Writer's Magazine. A number of the group are professional writers who have appeared in commercial magazines & books.

Poets' Haven News-Journal, Cecile Bonham, 1219 Orange Grove Ave., Glendale 5, Cal. is offering a prize of \$3 "for the best poem—in the cinquain form—submitted before August 1, 1949. The prize has been made available by Albert Ralph Korn. Poets' Haven, of course, is the excellent self-help cooperative writers' group run for and by shut-ins. This magazine is now being printed, instead of appearing in its former mimeo form.

WOMAN'S DAY, Dorothy Blake, Neighbor Editor, 19 West 44th St., NYC 18, pays \$3 for a fairly large number of letters, and \$1 each time a practical Neighbor suggestion is used from a letter. This is a good way to reduce your postage bill. Study the book!

Here's a suggestion. Summer is the time a writer can pick up illustrated travel booklets, folders and even postcards everywhere free or for a few cents. Many of these contain suggestions for good feature articles, pictures to illustrate the same, etc. Best thing about them, too, is they always indicate the address of the travel bureau which published them.

All you need to do is to write in and get further particulars. If the agency does not have all the information, the officials can often track it down for you, or refer you to the original source. Some of the big hotels and railroad systems have efficient publicity departments. Whenever possible a writer should try to get pictures that haven't been used too much. Obviously, a magazine editor doesn't want to let his magazine appear to be just a rehash of a travel booklet. But if a travel agency, railroad or steamship line is aware that you have an assignment from or a good chance of selling an article to a magazine with a good circulation, it will generally cooperate in giving you a fairly exclusive set-up.

Some relatively small hotel folders often have an interesting historical fact or two, or the mention of a nearby place that might form the springboard for an interesting article. Occasionally, these may be assembled with similar material from other places. An alert reporter thus picks up a story. A good feature story frequently assembles very unoriginal material in a unique way. Particularly, too, in the juvenile field, the same material is handled repeatedly over and over for each new generation of readers. Even the stay-at-home writer can thus write about far places, if he uses imagination.

### LIST OF NEWSPAPER MAGAZINE SUPPLEMENTS

Here's a market list tip that came to REWRITE in a peculiar way. Graham Hunter, the cartoonist and writer of light humor, wrote in to know if there is any list of newspaper magazine supplements in existence. (None of the writers' market lists apparently realize that such a list is important!) So we suggested Graham consult EDITOR & PUBLISHER trade magazine of the newspaper editors.

Here's Graham's report: "They print such a list in their annual Yearbook. All newspapers having such supplements are listed in a geographical arrangement by States, some 26 papers in all. Page-size is given; and also the chief editor and method of printing."

Obviously, this is a valuable group list. The Yearbook is on file in some libraries or it may be obtained through WRITERS' BOOK CLUB

### NEWS OF SOME PRIZES

The Poetry Society of Texas, 2945 Stanford, Dallas, Texas, brought together in its monthly bulletin for May a revised list of annual and monthly prizes. These are substantial money prizes and many of them are "open" prize contests, in which any poet may try for honors.

Houghton Mifflin Co., 2 Park St., Boston, 7, Mass., is again distributing blanks that writers may use for applying for the Fellowships (2) awarded each year on March 15. A contract can be won any time during a year. The Fellowships are for \$2,400, one-half is an advance on royalties.

### FILE THIS ONE FOR FUTURE USE

J.B. Lippincott Co. pointed a moral writer victims of the begging racket should memorize. The firm did this in an anecdote about an anecdote. Clyde Brion Davis was approached allegedly for his funniest anecdote. He cited the one about Anatole France, who was requested to donate an anecdote to a forthcoming book. M. France wrote back suggesting that the publisher invite all the butchers, pretty please, to contribute a choice chop. He promised faithfully that as soon as sufficient supplies were on hand, he would offer a fine selection from his own stock-in-trade!

### BUYERS OF "COURSES", BEWARE!

One of REWRITE'S subscribers tells us she was twice threatened with a suit for damages by the publishers of a mail-order short story "course" published in Chicago. She signed a coupon asking for particulars that also allowed the operators to send the lessons C.O.D. She was lucky; the P. O. did not notify her. So the postal inspectors persuaded the company to stop bothering this woman. It is apparently a legal racket that can cause you expense and trouble. Read; don't sign!

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### NEWS OF THE WRITERS' BOOK CLUB

Two important steps have been taken by the WRITERS' BOOK CLUB. They represent two projects that will help writers further. (1) We are the exclusive American distributors now for PLOT DIGEST, the excellent English book about plotting. (We persuaded the publisher to reduce the price to \$6.00.) (2) We have agreed to assist Herschel Brickell to build a wider market for the Pocket Books edition of the C. Henry Memorial Prize Stories, 25c. These stories are the cream of the many anthologies edited by Herschel and others. The authors receive a royal for this reprinting. You may order either of these books through us.

As we went to press, the total of our orders for 6 months in 1949 equalled practically those for the whole of 1948. Partly this is due to a phenomenal sale for "WRITERS ON WRITING". But even taking this book into account, it is plain that more writers & their friends are buying all their books from the WRITERS' BOOK CLUB, thus (1) saving money for themselves; (2) making more money for authors; and (3) strengthening the many public-spirited projects sponsored by REWRITE. Remember 6 purchases earn you a Book Dividend of \$2.50 or \$3.00. And we advise you gladly as to the best books to serve your purpose.

### THE MONTH'S SELECTIONS

WRITERS ON WRITING. Ed. by Herschel Brickell. Chapters by Carroll S. Towle, William E. Harris, Esther Forbes and others. \$3.00. Handbook by members of the staff at the University of N. H. The result of 11 years practical work with writers. It covers most of the fields of popular writing.

111 DON'TS FOR WRITERS. Maren Elwood. \$2.95. Here is a very helpful book that any writer can use as a checklist to prevent rejections. A writer can learn a great deal from the short paragraphs about many common mistakes.

A MANUAL OF STYLE. Univ. of Chicago Press. \$4. A standard book for writers, editors, printers and everyone using words as a medium of expression. It will help you to make all of your mss. conform to editorial requirements. A time-saver with its rules and tables.

### CONTINUED RECOMMENDATIONS

ARTICLE WRITING & MARKETING. Geo. I. Bird. \$5.50. A thorough, detailed analysis of the feature article. Most up-to-date & helpful.

WRITING—From Idea to Printed Page. \$5.95.. A very valuable casebook of actual feature stories and picture-articles used by the SEP and worked on by writers under the editorial supervision of SEP editors. A pictorial explanation of how it is done.

WEBSTER'S NEW COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY. \$6. No better dictionary for the price exists.

THE WRITER'S HANDBOOK. \$4.50. Without question the best available market list in book form. It's been newly revised and there are 69 instructive articles on all phases of the writing and selling business. We use it.

PLOT DIGEST. Kobold Knight. \$6.00. An English writer's detailed and helpful analysis of plot construction. We have found it most helpful. The author has sold to American magazines. It is highly practical.

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BOOKS OF PERMANENT WORTH

CRAFT OF THE SHORT STORY. Richard Summers.. \$3.50. One of the best, and most practical books on the technique of writing and being a writer. Summers talks a writer's language. A best-seller in our book shop. Deservedly.

WRITE THE SHORT STORY. Maren Elwood. \$3.50  
CHARACTERS MAKE YOUR STORY. each.  
Two excellent books on fiction writing. They will last for many years.

STORY WRITING. Edith Mirrieles. \$3. One of the great books and a personal favorite here at WCS House. We would not be without it.

ASPECTS OF THE NOVEL. E.M. Forster. \$3. This is standard for all first novelists. Especially those attempting Quality novels.

FIRST PRINCIPLES OF VERSE. Robert Hillyer. \$2. A basic book for verse writers by a poet of distinction. Every poet should own it.

WRITING & SELLING SPECIAL FEATURE ARTICLES. Patterson & Hyde. \$4.55. A Univ. of Wisconsin School of Journalism book. Practical and successful in starting many writers.

MAGAZINE ARTICLE WRITING. Brennecke & Clark. \$3.90. This one is a Columbia University title. It emphasizes magazine feature writing. Its "know how" quality is high.

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